

# Study of text messaging service shows participants prepared for motherhood

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Following last week's mHealth Summit, the largest event of its kind where leaders focus on how wireless technology can improve health outcomes, text4baby announced results from the first randomized evaluation of its service. The largest mobile health initiative in the U.S., text4baby was found to be an effective service for pregnant women.

The George Washington University-led randomized evaluation found that text4baby mothers were "nearly three times more likely to believe that they were prepared to be new mothers compared to those in the no exposure control group." The study randomized participants to enroll in text4baby, the free mobile information service that provides [pregnant women](#) and moms with babies under age one with customized health and safety information and public health alerts.

"Pregnant women who received text messages on health topics were nearly three times more likely to believe that they were well-prepared to be [new mothers](#) compared to women in the control group," said lead author W. Douglas Evans, PhD, MA, professor of prevention and community health at SPHHS. "This first-of-a-kind study suggests that [mobile phone technology](#) can be used to motivate pregnant women to establish the habits they need to stay healthy and raise a healthy child."

All 123 participants in the [pilot study](#) were low-income pregnant women receiving care at the Fairfax County, Virginia Health Department and were primarily Spanish-speaking. Half of the women in the study received text4baby messages and continued their usual care while the

control group received their usual care without the text messages. The study surveyed the women before receiving the text messages and at follow-up (approximately 28 weeks of baby's gestational age). Results demonstrated that text4baby participation improved a central belief among mothers that are targeted by the service - that the pregnant woman receiving text messages was prepared for motherhood.

The goal of the pilot study was to see if text messaging could be used to help the women understand the importance of not smoking, eating a healthy diet and other behaviors that can add up to health long after the baby is born, Evans said. The customized service seemed to pay off—at least in this pilot study: In addition to being more prepared for the arrival of a new baby, the pregnant women seemed more likely to understand the value of habits such as eating healthy foods or regular visits to a health provider or clinic.

"Results from this evaluation provide further evidence of the value of the text4baby service for pregnant women and mothers with babies under age one," said Sarah Ingersoll, Director, Text4baby. "We look forward to reaching more women and increasing their preparedness for motherhood."

The George Washington University Study participants completed a 24-item interviewer-administered questionnaire with data collection taking place from April 2011 - April 2012. The report was published on November 26 in the *BMC Public Health Journal*.

Provided by George Washington University

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